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ABSTRACT

The Adventures in Attitudes (AIA) program is a 30-hour structured experiential seminar developed to help participants create positive attitudes and overcome negative ones. Effectiveness of AIA in promoting a positive self concept and moving an individual from an external to an internal locus of control was investigated. Adult subjects (N=6) in the experimental group were enrolled in the AIA program and met over a period of three weeks. The control group, undergraduates enrolled in a psychology course (N=6), were taught by the lecture-discussion method of instruction. Both groups were administered pre- and post-tests using the Rotter Internal-External Scale to determine locus of control, and The Threat Index to assess discrepancies between real/ideal self as a measure of self concept. Results indicate that AIA participants made significant shifts in moving from an external to an internal locus of control, and experienced more congruence between their real and ideal selves than did the control group. These significant gains by the AIA participants suggest that experiential group-oriented structured activities are often more effective in changing attitudes and behavior than more traditional lecture methods. (NRB)

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A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF "ADVENTURES IN ATTITUDES"
STRUCTURED HUMAN RELATIONS SEMINARS

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Despite the rapid scientific and technological advance in our society individuals are still beset by crucial existential dilemmas. Many question the wisdom of a world that can split the atom but cannot unite humanity. As noted by Coleman and Hammen (1979) one of the most serious problems with which we are confronted is the uniquely human problem of self-direction. This problem is reflected in the tasks of achieving adequate information about ourselves and our world, clarifying satisfactory value systems for guiding our choices, and working out effective modes of adjustment for achieving meaningful and fulfilling lives. At a personal level, the three questions, "Who Am I? Where Am I going? and Why?" are crucial for the individual. These questions are of utmost importance in giving direction to one's life since they deal with personal attitudes, self-concept, self knowledge, life plans, competencies, and value judgments and patterns.

In an attempt to assist individuals in exploring and gaining awareness into these areas of their own personal dynamics and the implications on family, work and social situations, Personal Dynamics Institute has developed a structured experiential program, "Adventures in Attitudes."

The Adventures in Attitudes (AIA) program, a thirty-hour structured experiential seminar in personal development, combines the Socratic method of learning with Transactional Analysis, Psycho-Cybernetics and other modern concepts, by means of discussion, thinking, feeling, role-playing and "real life" simulation exercises. More than 100,000 participants have attended workshops during the past six years, (Personal Dynamics Inst., 1979). The essential purpose of the program is to

create positive attitudes and to help the individual overcome the negative attitudes which may adversely affect all the vital aspects of their relationships with others. There are practical techniques for building self confidence and improving the self image, developing leadership skills, managing time and setting life goals, in addition to improving listening and communication skills. The program features seventy-four different structured exercises which are supplemented by lecturettes. A major goal is to assist individuals in affirming their strengths by concentrating on the positive aspects of thinking and behavior, and by stressing personal responsibility and the crucial role of attitudinal choice in our relationships with others.

A limitation of the AIA program has been the lack of systematic outcome studies validating its effectiveness in changing attitudes as well as focussing on the basic human relations skills necessary to improve interpersonal relationships. Since a number of studies have identified low self-esteem (Combs, 1962; Shepherd, 1964; Scarpitti, 1965; Branden, 1969) and an external locus of control (Jacobs, 1972; Houston, 1972; Kash, 1975) as crucial personality variables adversely affecting an individual's attitudes and interpersonal relationships, these concepts were chosen for evaluation.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no significant difference on self concept when comparing the experimental and control groups' post test scores.
2. There will be no significant difference on internal/external locus of control when comparing the experimental and

control groups' post test scores.

OTHER STUDIES

A brief review of related literature, is confined to research regarding self concept and locus of control in general and AIA seminars in particular. Crown and Stephens (1961) note that the terms self concept, self esteem, self-regard, self acceptance and satisfaction with self are used interchangeably by many writers. Coopersmith (1967) describes self esteem as the personal evaluations which individuals maintain relative to being perceived as capable, significant, successful and worthy.

A number of studies (Shepherd, 1964; Combs, 1962; Branden, 1969) indicate that persons high in self esteem are happier and more effective in meeting environmental demands than are persons with low self esteem.

Rogers (1951) maintains that congruence between one's self concept and one's ideal self concept is central to the effective functioning of the individual. His theory postulates that vast discrepancies between one's self concept and ideal self concept create personal feelings of threat, or anxiety. Successful counseling or psychotherapy results in congruence between the two. (Truax, Schuldt, and Wargo, 1968)

Truax (1968) evaluated the client-centered hypothesis by obtaining measures from three studies of group psychotherapy -- hospitalized mental patients, psycho-neurotic outpatients, and institutionalized juvenile delinquents. His stated hypotheses included: (1) there is a negative relationship between self/ideal congruence and measures of anxiety or maladjustment, (2)

there is a positive relationship between increases in self/ideal congruence and positive therapeutic outcome, and (3) changes in self/ideal congruence are related changes in self rather than in ideal self concept. Results supported the first two hypotheses relatively strongly with all three patient populations, while the third hypothesis was supported with outpatients only.

The locus of control concept was derived from Rotter's (1954) Social Learning Theory, which he postulates how choices are made by individuals from the variety of potential behaviors available to them. An individual's locus of control can range from a purely internal orientation to a totally external emphasis. An individual operating from an internal locus of control believes that rewards and punishments are contingent upon one's own actions and attributes, whereas, an external locus of control is characterized by the belief that one's reinforcements and punishments are controlled by forces outside oneself (Rotter, 1975).

In terms of psychotherapy, Smith (1970) found that individuals seeking counseling to resolve an immediate, acute crisis showed a significant decrease in externality as they acquired more effective coping techniques in therapy. Further Gillis and Jessor (1970) noted that patients who showed improvement in psychotherapy also revealed greater increases in internal beliefs than did an untreated group of patients.

Foulds (1971) examined the effects of personal growth experiences on locus of control beliefs. Thirty undergraduates participated in four half-hour therapy-like sessions once week for eight weeks. A control group of similar students did not par-

ticipate. Pre-post testing noted a significant increase in internal scores occurred for the experimental group when compared to the control group. Thus experiences in an atmosphere of acceptance and unstructured group exploration and expression can facilitate a sense of internal control.

The literature seems to indicate that those individuals who participate fully in society achieve their goals in life and continually strive to actualize their potential appear to be more internal. Although Rotter (1975) advises against equating all positive personal characteristics with internality and all negative personality characteristics with externality, Kash (1975) concludes that an internal sense of control is certainly preferable to an external sense of control.

The only published research on Adventures in Attitudes seminars was conducted by Nelson (1978). Seventy-two university nursing students enrolled in their first nursing course (thirty-six were randomly assigned to the control group and received no special instruction or emphasis regarding attitudes, and the thirty-six subjects assigned to the experimental group participated in AIA.) were pre- and post-tested on ten of the twenty-nine variables of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale. AIA participants recorded statistically significant differences in three of the ten variables with positive trends noted in eight of the ten variables.

Procedure and Statistical Treatment

The present study was confined to six adults participating in the AIA seminar, and six students attending either of two

psychology courses. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the AIA program in promoting a positive self concept and to assess its effectiveness in moving an individual from an external to an internal locus of control. The six individuals participating in the AIA seminar were considered the experimental group, whereas the control group was selected from students enrolled in two psychology classes. Both groups were administered pre- post-tests using the Rotter Internal-External Scale to determine locus of control in addition to The Threat Index to assess discrepancies between real/ideal self as a measure of self concept. To enhance the validity of the study, the six pre-test scores of the experimental group were matched as closely as possible with six scores from the control group population so that the mean scores and number of subjects in the two groups were identical.

Subjects in the control group were taught by the normal lecture discussion method of instruction and they received no additional classroom work or emphasis on attitudes. These psychology classes were conducted one hour per day over a six-week period of time. The experimental group were enrolled in the thirty-hour program Adventures in Attitudes designed to promote positive attitudes and enhance self development. They met over a period of three weeks -- four evenings for a total of fifteen hours and two all-day sessions totaling fifteen hours. Post-tests were administered at the conclusion of both periods of instruction. Significant differences between post test mean scores for the experimental and control groups on both the Rotter's Internal-External Scale and The Threat Index were investigated by the t test.

Instruments

The Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale is a twenty-nine item forced-choice paper and pencil inventory designed to assess the degree to which individuals attribute the events that happen to them as being within or beyond their personal control and understanding. The scale was originally developed by Rotter, Leverant, Seeman and Crowne in 1961 and finally published by Rotter (1966). Six of the twenty-nine items used in the scale are fillers which are designed to enhance the scale's ambiguity. The remaining twenty-three items are scored one point for each external choice. Lower scorers represent a more internal locus of control. Mean scores are slightly above 10 for college students (Rotter, 1966). Test-retest ranges from .49 to .83 (moderate to moderately high).

The Threat Index (TI) is theoretically based on George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. It was originally developed in 1972 as a measure of death orientation, but since that time has been adapted to other uses. In this research project the TI was used as a measure of self concept -- specifically to assess splits between real and ideal self on pre- and post-evaluations.

The scale consists of forty bi-polar adjectives such as "kind-cruel, calm-anxious, productive-unproductive." In this research project, participants were given two of these scales -- one to measure "real" self (how they see themselves now.), the other to measure "ideal" self (how they would like to see themselves). The subjects were instructed to circle the bi-polar variable best describing themselves in these two categories,

the score being the actual number of discrepancies or splits between real and ideal. Test-retest reliability ranges from .49 to .90 (moderately high to high).

Results

Results listed in table one indicate that mean post-test scores on the Rotter's Internal-External scale for the control group were found to be significantly higher than the mean for the group that participated in the AIA seminar ($t(10) = 2.260$, $p < .05$). Since a larger score reflects externally-oriented attitudes, these results indicate the AIA participants made significant shifts in moving from an external to an internal locus of control.

In table 2, mean post-test score on The Threat Index for the control group was also found to be significantly higher than the mean for the group that participated in the AIA seminar ($t(10) = 3.076$, $p < .05$). This also reflects positive results for the experimental group (AIA participants). Their scores indicate fewer discrepancies or splits between real/ideal selves which means they experienced more congruence between their real and ideal selves.

Insert Table One and Two About Here

Summary and Implications

In summary, the results of this investigation demonstrate that the attitudes of individuals can be positively influenced

TABLE I.
THREAT INDEX RESULTS

	<u>X PRE</u>	<u>X POST</u>	<u>DIFFERENCE</u>
EXPERIMENTAL	12.5	4.0	2.8
CONTROL	12.5	6.8	

$$t(10) = 3.076 \quad p < .05$$

TABLE II.
INTERNAL-EXTERNAL CONTROL SCALE

	<u>X PRE</u>	<u>X POST</u>	<u>DIFFERENCE</u>
EXPERIMENTAL	10.33	4.33	5.17
CONTROL	10.33	9.5	

$$t(10) = 2.26 \quad p < .05$$

by a selected learning experience focusing on interpersonal communication skills. The outcome of the study indicates that the thrity-hour program, Adventures in Attitudes, can be effective in inducing changes in attitudes concerning the factors of internal/external control and in enhancing self esteem.

This study raises a number of questions which should be addressed in future research studies. Among them are: Which exercises or structured experiences within the AIA program are associated with or responsible for the change in attitudes? Which parts could be eliminated and the changes in attitudes still be maintained? Are the results of this study measures of attitudinal change or measures of changes in feeling or emotions? Further, if two AIA seminars were going concurrently and one group was administered the post-test measures immediately following the conclusion of the program and the other group was given the measures two weeks later, would there be a significant difference in the scores? Also, if a follow-up study were done with the AIA participants, would the scores be consistent with the first set of post-test results?

There are obvious limitations of the study; for example, the control group in this research project was limited to students enrolled in two psychology classes at a southern university during the summer quarter of 1979. Data was self-reported and limited to a measure of internal-external locus of control obtained from the Rotter Internal-External Scale, and real/ideal self concept information obtained by The Threat Index. An assumption is also made that self-report data of this type is valid. Another limitation would involve the self

selective nature of the experimental group. Those who chose to participate in AIA may be characterized by a higher motivation for personal change and development than the general population.

However, results of this study implicate that people can, through the use of systematic training of structured experiential learning programs, improve their self concept and interaction skills with others and learn to take responsibility for themselves by formulating action-oriented goals. These positive steps toward self-growth can, in turn, help them achieve more meaningful, enriched, and fulfilling lives.

Since the experimental and control groups were both focusing on topics to improve inter- and intra-personality relationships, the significant gains registered by AIA participants can also imply that experiential group-oriented structured activities are often more effective in changing attitudes and behavior than the more traditional lecture methods of a typical introductory psychology class.

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